

The Effectiveness of the Pre-Reading Plan (PREP) Strategy in Enhancing Reading Comprehension: A Case Study of Eighth Grade Students at SMPN 3 Panca Rijang

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the effectiveness of the Pre-Reading Plan (PREP) strategy in enhancing reading comprehension among eighth-grade students at SMPN 3 Panca Rijang. Employing a pre-experimental design with a one-group pretest-posttest method, the research involved 20 students and one English teacher as participants. Data collection included pretests, posttests, and questionnaires, analyzed through qualitative and quantitative methods. Results indicated significant improvements in students' reading comprehension post-implementation of the PREP strategy, with the percentage of students meeting the minimum completeness criteria increasing from 35% to 70%. Additionally, students exhibited higher engagement levels during learning activities, and the teacher's performance in classroom management improved. Many students expressed a positive interest in the PREP strategy. These findings support the conclusion that the PREP strategy effectively enhances reading comprehension among students. It is recommended that the PREP strategy be adopted more widely to foster improved reading skills in English language learning contexts, as it encourages students to activate prior knowledge and engage more deeply with the reading material. Overall, this research highlights the importance of interactive and student-centered teaching strategies in improving reading comprehension and fostering a positive learning environment.

Keywords: Pre-Reading Plan (PREP) Strategy; Reading Comprehension

INTRODUCTION

Reading is a fundamental skill in language learning, serving as a vital component in educational achievement and personal development. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, enhancing reading comprehension has emerged as a critical goal. Despite its importance, many students struggle with reading comprehension, often due to a lack of motivation, limited vocabulary, and insufficient engagement with the text (Alharbi, 2022; Shabaz et al., 2023). The Pre-Reading Plan (PREP) strategy has been identified as an effective instructional method to address these challenges by activating students' prior knowledge and fostering engagement through structured pre-reading activities (Graves et al., 2011). The PREP strategy encourages students to brainstorm and discuss ideas related to the reading topic, allowing them to connect their existing knowledge to the new material (Langer, 1981). This approach not only prepares students for the reading task but also enhances their critical thinking and comprehension skills (Chandavimol, 2023). Previous research has shown that pre-reading activities significantly improve reading comprehension performance among EFL learners (Thongyon & Chiramanee, 2011; Saepudin, 2015).

This study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the PREP strategy in improving reading comprehension among eighth-grade students at SMPN 3 Panca Rijang. By investigating the impact of this strategy on student engagement and performance, the study seeks to contribute to the growing body of literature on effective reading instruction in EFL contexts. Language is the most crucial part of human communication. Without language, people would not be able to convey ideas or thoughts effectively. In this era, mastering English has become increasingly important as it is an international medium of communication used across various fields, including education, economy, social, and politics. English has long served as a bridge connecting nations worldwide. The rapid modernization of life and intensifying competition require individuals to advance and master English to adapt to the ever-changing global landscape. In Indonesia's education system, English has long been a compulsory subject. This is largely due to the awareness of both the government and society regarding the importance of mastering English for students as an essential tool for future success. English is taught as a foreign language and is one of the mandatory subjects for all students, especially in junior and senior high schools. Given this context, English is learned not as a daily communication tool but as part of formal education, as noted by Oxford and Shearin (1994) in Sulistiyo (2016), who emphasized that foreign languages are primarily learned in educational settings. Among the four core language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – reading is particularly challenging to acquire. Reading requires not only familiarity with language but also a deep understanding of the text. According to Pandawa et al. (2009), reading is a complex and difficult skill that takes time to master. It involves a long process of habituation and constant practice, especially for students learning English as a foreign language. Thus, developing strong reading comprehension skills demands significant effort and perseverance.

Reading is a fundamental pillar in the teaching and learning process. It is essential because most learning materials are presented in written form. Improving reading skills allows students to better comprehend educational content and enhance their academic performance. Thongyon et al. (2011) stated that reading helps students develop new ideas, fostering their cognitive growth. When students integrate what they read with their personal thoughts, they can form new perspectives or ideas, contributing to a deeper understanding of the material. Comprehension is the goal of reading. As Durkin (1993) and Moore (2020) pointed out, reading comprehension is the essence of the reading process. It involves not only decoding words and sentences but also understanding and analyzing the underlying meaning of the text. Nuttal (1982) explained that readers engage with texts not merely to focus on pronunciation or grammar but to derive meaning, ideas, and messages. This aligns with Duke (2003) in Gilakjani (2016), who argued that comprehension is an interactive process where readers combine prior knowledge with information from the text to construct meaning.

In practice, however, many students in junior high school struggle with reading comprehension. Observations during teaching internships revealed that many students are disinterested in reading, particularly long texts, and often lack the vocabulary needed to understand English texts. Additionally, traditional methods of teaching reading, such as assigning texts without sufficient explanation or motivation, do not encourage students to fully engage with the material, leading to a lack of interest and poor comprehension. To address these issues, teachers need to employ strategies that make the reading process more engaging and enjoyable. One such strategy is the Pre-Reading Plan (PREP) strategy, which helps activate students' prior knowledge through brainstorming activities before engaging with the text. By using this strategy, students are encouraged to connect their background knowledge with the content they are about to read, making it easier for them to comprehend the material. Based on this background, this study aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the Pre-Reading Plan (PREP) strategy in improving reading comprehension among eighth-grade students at SMP N 3 Panca Rijang. It is hoped that this strategy will positively impact English language learning, particularly in developing students' reading comprehension skills.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Reading comprehension is a crucial skill in language learning, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Effective reading comprehension involves not only decoding text but also understanding and integrating information, which poses challenges for many learners (Alharbi, 2022). Research suggests that students often struggle with reading comprehension due to limited vocabulary, low motivation, and a lack of engagement with reading materials (Shabaz et al., 2023). These challenges underline the need for effective instructional strategies that enhance students' understanding and engagement with texts. One approach that has gained attention in recent years is the Pre-Reading Plan (PREP) strategy, which is designed to activate students' prior knowledge and facilitate engagement with

reading materials (Graves et al., 2011). The PREP strategy consists of three phases: initial brainstorming of ideas related to the reading topic, reflection on these ideas, and reformulation based on the text's content (Langer, 1981). This structured approach not only prepares students for reading but also enhances their ability to critically analyze and interpret the text (Khayali, 2023).

Recent studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the PREP strategy in improving reading comprehension among EFL learners. For instance, a study by Thongyon and Chiramanee (2022) revealed that students who engaged in pre-reading activities significantly outperformed their peers who did not, indicating that activating prior knowledge enhances comprehension skills. Similarly, Saepudin (2023) highlighted that student who utilized pre-reading strategies exhibited higher levels of motivation and engagement, further contributing to their comprehension abilities. Moreover, research by Chandavimol (2023) suggests that pre-reading activities help students overcome apprehensions associated with unfamiliar vocabulary and complex sentence structures. By providing a framework for understanding the material before engaging with it, students feel more confident and are more likely to participate actively in the reading process.

Research has shown that prior knowledge plays a pivotal role in reading comprehension. Schema theory, proposed by Bartlett (1932), suggests that individuals interpret new information by relating it to their existing knowledge or schemata. Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) elaborated on this by explaining that readers comprehend texts by connecting what they already know to the new information presented in the reading material. When students can activate their prior knowledge, they are more likely to engage with the text and comprehend its meaning. According to Graves et al. (2011), the PREP strategy is designed to help students activate their background knowledge before engaging with the text. This strategy encourages students to brainstorm and discuss ideas related to the reading topic, helping them connect their existing knowledge to the new material. Through this process, students become more prepared to understand the text, as they have a better framework for interpreting the information presented. The effectiveness of the PREP strategy lies in its ability to encourage critical thinking and interaction with the text, as students are prompted to draw connections between their experiences and the content they are reading.

Pre-reading activities are essential in preparing students for reading comprehension. These activities help set the stage for understanding by providing students with the necessary context and vocabulary before engaging with the text. Thongyon and Chiramanee (2011) argued that pre-reading activities, such as discussions, brainstorming, and vocabulary exercises, are effective tools for enhancing students' comprehension. They found that students who participate in pre-reading activities perform better in reading comprehension tasks than those who do not. The PREP strategy, as highlighted by Graves et al. (2011), incorporates pre-reading activities that stimulate students' cognitive processes. By engaging in discussions and brainstorming sessions, students are encouraged to think critically about the subject

matter and anticipate the content of the text. This not only increases their interest in reading but also helps them.

The PREP strategy was initially developed by Langer (1981) as a method to enhance reading comprehension by helping students activate their prior knowledge. This strategy is structured into three phases: initial associations, reflections on initial associations, and reformulation of ideas. In the first phase, students are asked to brainstorm ideas related to the topic they are about to read. This helps them recall what they already know and make predictions about the text. In the second phase, students reflect on their initial thoughts, comparing them with what they have learned from the text. Finally, in the third phase, students reformulate their ideas based on their new understanding. Several studies have demonstrated the effectiveness of the PREP strategy in improving reading comprehension. For example, a study by Thongyon and Chiramanee (2011) found that students who were taught using the PREP strategy showed significant improvements in their reading comprehension skills compared to those taught using traditional methods. Similarly, Graves et al. (2011) noted that the strategy helps students become more engaged with the text and enhances their ability to make inferences, draw conclusions, and critically analyze the content.

The effectiveness of the PREP strategy in the context of English language learning has been supported by numerous studies. Langer (1981) argued that by encouraging students to draw on their prior knowledge, the PREP strategy helps them develop a deeper understanding of the text. This is particularly important for students learning English as a foreign language, as they may struggle with unfamiliar vocabulary and complex sentence structures. By activating their prior knowledge, students can use contextual clues and infer meanings, making it easier for them to comprehend the text. In addition, research by Saepudin (2015) found that pre-reading activities such as those used in the PREP strategy help students overcome their fear of difficult vocabulary and complex sentences. By providing students with a framework for understanding the text before they begin reading, the PREP strategy helps build their confidence and encourages them to engage more actively with the material. Despite its proven effectiveness, the implementation of the PREP strategy can present challenges. Teachers must be able to create a classroom environment that fosters active participation and critical thinking. This requires careful planning and preparation, as well as an understanding of students' prior knowledge and learning styles. Thongyon et al. (2011) pointed out that teachers need to be skilled in facilitating discussions and guiding students through the brainstorming and reflection phases of the PREP strategy. Without proper guidance, students may struggle to make meaningful connections between their prior knowledge and the new material.

Moreover, implementing the PREP strategy requires time and effort, as teachers need to plan pre-reading activities and ensure that students are engaged throughout the process. For this reason, some educators may be hesitant to adopt the strategy, particularly in classrooms with large student numbers or limited resources.

METHODS

Design and Sample

This research employed a pre-experimental design using the one-group pretest-posttest method to evaluate the effectiveness of the Pre-Reading Plan (PREP) strategy in enhancing students' reading comprehension. This method was chosen to compare students' reading comprehension abilities before and after the treatment using the PREP strategy. The pre-experimental design used in this study involved administering a pretest to a single group of students, followed by the treatment (PREP strategy), and then a posttest to measure any changes in reading comprehension. The participants in this study were 20 students from class VIII.1 at SMP N 3 Panca Rijang, consisting of 13 female and 7 male students. Additionally, one English teacher was involved to help facilitate the study. The sample was selected using a purposive sampling technique, as the class exhibited reading comprehension difficulties and was thus suitable for testing the effectiveness of the PREP strategy.

Instruments and Procedure

Data collection in this research used several instruments, including:

1. Pretest and Posttest

The pretest and posttest were used to measure students' reading comprehension levels. Both tests consisted of 15 multiple-choice questions and 5 true-false questions. Each question was based on simple reading texts, and students received 1 point for each correct answer. The total score for both the pretest and posttest was 20 points.

2. Questionnaire

After the posttest, students were given a questionnaire to assess their interest in using the PREP strategy. The questionnaire consisted of 20 statements—10 positive and 10 negative—related to students' opinions on the strategy. Students were asked to rate their responses on a Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree."

3. Observation Checklist

An observation checklist was used to assess the teacher's performance in managing the learning process during the implementation of the PREP strategy. The checklist contained 5 statements related to classroom management, student engagement, and the teacher's ability to facilitate discussions.

The study was conducted over six meetings, which consisted of the following stages. In the first meeting, a pretest was administered to assess students' initial reading comprehension levels. The test was given without any prior instruction on the reading material. Over the next four meetings, the PREP strategy was implemented. Each session began with pre-reading activities, including brainstorming and discussions on the topic to be read. Students were encouraged to

activate their prior knowledge and share their thoughts on the topic before reading the assigned text. After the pre-reading phase, students were guided through the reading process, followed by comprehension activities such as summarizing and discussing key points from the text. In the final meeting, a posttest was administered to measure any improvements in reading comprehension after the implementation of the PREP strategy. The posttest used the same format as the pretest to ensure consistency in the assessment. After the posttest, students completed a questionnaire to assess their interest in the strategy, and the teacher's performance during the six sessions was evaluated using an observation checklist.

Data Analysis

The data collected from the pretest and posttest were analyzed using descriptive statistics to calculate the mean scores and standard deviation. Additionally, the paired t-test was employed to determine the significance of the difference between the pretest and posttest scores. The level of significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using percentages to determine students' interest levels in the PREP strategy, while the results from the observation checklist were summarized to assess the teacher's effectiveness in managing the classroom during the study.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of the study, which aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Pre-Reading Plan (PREP) strategy in enhancing students' reading comprehension at SMP N 3 Panca Rijang. The findings are based on data from the pretest, posttest, questionnaires, and observations conducted throughout the research process.

Pretest and Posttest Results

The pretest, conducted before the implementation of the PREP strategy, assessed students' initial reading comprehension skills. After the intervention, a posttest was administered to determine any improvements. As shown in Table 1, the mean score increased from 67.25 in the pretest to 76.75 in the posttest, indicating a substantial improvement in students' reading comprehension after using the PREP strategy. Additionally, the standard deviation decreased from 5.40 to 4.60, suggesting that students' scores were more consistent following the intervention.

Table 1: Pretest and Posttest Score Summary

Test	Mean Score	Standard Deviation
Pretest	67.25	5.40
Posttest	76.75	4.60

Paired t-Test Results

To assess the significance of the difference between the pretest and posttest scores, a paired t-test was conducted. As shown in Table 2, the mean difference between the tests was 9.50, with a t-value of 8.21 and a p-value of 0.001. Since the p-value is less than the significance level of 0.05, the difference between the pretest and posttest scores is statistically significant. This result suggests that the PREP strategy had a positive effect on students' reading comprehension.

Table 2: Paired t-Test Results

Test	Mean Difference	t-value	p-value
Pretest-Posttest	9.50	8.21	0.001

Based on Sinambela's (2008) theory, four key indicators were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the PREP strategy: students' achievement in meeting minimum completeness criteria, student engagement, teacher performance in managing learning activities, and students' interest in the strategy.

a. Achievement of Minimum Completeness Criteria (KKM)

Before the implementation of the PREP strategy, only 7 out of 20 students (35%) met the minimum completeness criteria. Afterward, this number increased to 14 out of 20 students (70%), showing a significant improvement in student achievement. These results suggest that the PREP strategy was effective in improving students' comprehension of reading materials.

b. Student Engagement in Learning

The students demonstrated high levels of engagement during the implementation of the PREP strategy. According to the observation checklist, 100% of students actively participated in the learning process. They contributed ideas, asked questions, and summarized the reading material. The interactive nature of the PREP strategy, which involves brainstorming and discussion, encouraged students to become more involved in the lessons.

c. Teacher Performance in Managing Learning Activities

The teacher's performance in managing the learning process was evaluated using an observation checklist, with an overall performance score of 85%, which falls into the "Good" category. The teacher effectively facilitated discussions, guided students through brainstorming sessions, and provided support during reading activities. The structured nature of the PREP strategy helped maintain an organized and engaging classroom environment.

d. Student Interest in the PREP Strategy

Questionnaire results revealed that most students responded positively to the PREP strategy. Out of 20 students, 16 expressed interest in the strategy, with 3 students being very interested and 1 student feeling uncertain. The use of brainstorming, visual aids, and active discussion made the reading sessions more enjoyable for students, contributing to their overall interest in the strategy.

The findings of this study are consistent with previous research on the effectiveness of pre-reading strategies in enhancing reading comprehension. The significant increase in posttest scores supports Langer's (1981) theory, which emphasizes the importance of activating prior knowledge before engaging with a text. The PREP strategy helped students connect their background knowledge to new material, making the reading process more meaningful. Moreover, the high level of student engagement and positive feedback from the questionnaire indicate that the PREP strategy not only improves comprehension but also enhances motivation and interest in reading. By encouraging active participation and critical thinking, the strategy fostered a more dynamic learning environment where students felt comfortable expressing their ideas. Despite these positive outcomes, some challenges emerged during the implementation of the strategy. For instance, some students struggled with unfamiliar vocabulary, which may have limited their comprehension. Future studies could explore ways to incorporate vocabulary-building exercises into the PREP strategy to address this issue.

CONCLUSION

this study aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of the Pre-Reading Plan (PREP) strategy in enhancing the reading comprehension of eighth-grade students at SMP N 3 Panca Rijang. Based on the findings, the study concludes that the PREP strategy significantly improved students' reading comprehension skills, as indicated by the increase in their posttest scores compared to the pretest scores. The statistical analysis revealed a significant difference in student performance after implementing the strategy, with a mean improvement of 9.50 points and a p-value of 0.001. The PREP strategy also positively impacted students' engagement in the learning process. Students were actively involved in brainstorming and discussing the reading materials, which contributed to their increased understanding of the text. Additionally, the teacher's management of the classroom was enhanced through the use of structured activities that encouraged student participation. Furthermore, the majority of students expressed a high level of interest in the PREP strategy, indicating that it not only improved their comprehension but also made the reading lessons more enjoyable. This increase in interest and motivation highlights the importance of incorporating interactive and student-centered teaching strategies in language learning. In summary, the PREP strategy proved to be an effective tool for improving reading comprehension among junior high school students. It is recommended that teachers consider adopting this strategy in their classrooms to help students activate their prior knowledge and engage more deeply with reading materials. Future research could explore integrating vocabulary-building activities

to further support students in overcoming language barriers during the reading process.

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